A STUDY OF L'IMMORALISTE AS A NOVELISTIC APPLICATION OF LES NOURRITURES TERRESTRES BY ANDRE GIDE

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PREFACE

Among the epistolary writers in the history of French literature of the twentieth century, one finds it obligatory to place André Gide in the first rank. He is one of the most persistent autobiographical writers among all French literary figures. He uses his skill in writing as a method of self-exploration and, more important, as a means of understanding himself.

It would be very difficult to place Gide in a particular school; he can be associated with several literary schools without belonging to any particular one. First, he was attracted concurrently to symbolism and the parnassians, but later renounced both. Then he turned his attention to the young Dadists and Surrealists, all of whom he subsequently abandoned.

In this study an attempt will be made to illustrate the philosophical themes in the dissertation, Les Nourritures terrestres, that are applied in the récit, L'Immoraliste.

This study will be divided into three chapters. In chapter one, the life of André Gide will be discussed. Emphasis will be placed on his heterogeneous background, his trip to North Africa, and the influence of the German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzche, and the Russian novelist, Dostoievski. The second chapter will give a detailed analysis of the principles or themes advanced by Gide in Les Nourritures terrestres which evidences his philosophy of life. The third and last chapter will

point out the way in which Gide applies these themes in L'Immoraliste.

Acknowledgement should be made to all those persons who gave generously of their time and efforts and whose interest and assistance, helped to make this thesis possible. The writer is deeply indebted to the following persons: Dr. Benjamin F. Hudson, whose helpful criticism and wise suggestions made the completion of this intellectual effort a reality; and to Dr. Maurice Cagon, whose lectures in the twentieth century novel class provided the inspiration to choose the thesis topic: L'Immoraliste as the Novelistic Application of Les Nourritures terrestres.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

LIFE OF ANDRE GIDE

> Je naquis le 22 Novembre 1869. Mes parents occupaient alors, rue de Médecis, un appartement au quatrième ou cinquième étage, qu'ils quittèrent quelques années plus tard, et dont je n'ai pas gardé souvenir. Je revois pourtant le balcon; la place à vol d'oiseau et le jet d'eau de son bassin où, plus précisément encore, je revois les dragons de papier, découpés par mon père, que nous lancions par - dessus le bassin de la place, jusqu'au jardin du Luxembourg ou les hautes branches des Marronniers les accrochaient.
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> Je revois aussi une assez grande table, celle de la salle à manger .... recourverte d'un tapis bas tombant.[1]

André Gide was born in Paris. Here, in this top-floor flat on the Rue de Médecis, is found the beginning of the life of a man who felt, on many occasions, that he was the product of two races, two provinces, and two religions.

The mother of André Gide, the former Juliette Rondeaux, was a Norman girl, whose family had live for five generations in Rouen. She was the epitome of a wealthy and spoiled young lady who had acquired her families' traits of austerity, a shrewed business sense, and very thrifty ways. Originally, the family had been of peasant stock and Catholic, but Juliette's immediate family was now protestant due to the marriage

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[1]Claude Martin, André Gide par lui - même, No. LXII of Ecrivain de toujours, ed. by M. Nathan and M. Rieussec (72 vols.; Paris: Tardy, 1963), p. 5.

of Juliette's father, Edouard Rondeaux, to a protestant, Julie Pouchet, who was as pious, reserved, and shy as she was skeptical. She was responsible for securing a tutor for Juliette at her fifteenth birthday. This act itself was not bad, of course, but, Miss Anna Shackleton, who was only nine years older than she, became her constant companion and tutor. Miss Shackleton was a staunch protestant, pious, intelligent, learned, and cultured, with a fluent knowledge of French and English, and a love for literature, music, and painting, along with a good reading knowledge of German and Italian. Juliette Rondeaux became passionately fond of her governess, and ces demoiselles, as they were called, became inseparable.[1]

André's father, Paul Gide, was born in a southern family at Uzès, a province in Languedoc. Until he was fifteen, he remained an only child. He attended a secondary school in Uzès, where the teaching of the humanities was by far more advanced than that of the sciences. Paul showed a keen interest in literature and was always first in his class in Greek, Latin, and French.[2]

Upon graduation, he received the prize for Roman Law and the gold medal for his doctorate thesis at the University of Aix. As a result of such outstanding scholarship, he was given a full professorship in law at the University of Paris.

Paul was a highly respected and brilliant professor of law. He was admired by many. Juliette, who had acquired the reputation for rejecting

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[1]Jean Delay, The Youth of André Gide (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 22.

[2]Ibid., p. 26.

the proposals of many an eligible bachelor, was no exception to the rule. She was strongly attracted to him. When Paul proposed, she accepted. In February, 1863, Paul Gide and Juliette Rondeaux were married. To this union, on November 22, 1869, six years later, André Paul Guillaume Gide, their one and only child was born.

Both parents dearly loved André, yet due to their individual personalities, each approached him differently. Whereas Paul had a more personal charm, was more tolerant, and an amiable sense of humor, Mme. Gide was much more solemn and authoritarians; in her relationship with her son, she constantly emphasized moral problems and scruples.[1] As a result, André felt primarily the influence of the protestant mentality; a marked devotion to the Bible, a constant practice of self-analysis and self-examination without recourse to a clergyman, and a strict set of rules for moral behavior.[2]

The tyrannical hand of André's mother caused many problems to occur in the life of the child. Even before his entrance into school, he suffered from nervous tension. He was already timid and he developed a feeling of inferiority. André had experienced many fears and nightmares; consequently, upon his entrance into school, with the bearing of his mother's moralities, and the fact that he had been plunged into an entirely new environment, Gide naturally developed certain incurable complexes. He began to feel that he was inferior to the rest of his classmates, he found that conversations were not his "cup of tea"; thus, he

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[1]Wallace Fowlie, André Gide: His Life and Art (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965), p. 12.

[2]Ibid.

began to feel himself alone, and would develop or invent symptoms of illness to stay away from school. From time to time, André experienced other matters that further drew him away from school. On several occasions, during the earlier stage of his education, André had been suspended from school for his constant practice of masturbation. At the age of eleven, his father died. His instability at school increased along with his feeling of being different from others. He began to suffer from insomnia, which plagued him throughout his life. When he was sent in October 1881, to the lycée of Montpellier, he constantly had bouts of nerves to keep him away from school.[1]

In 1882, André returned to Paris. In October he entered the cinquieme at the Ecole Alsacienne. Here, experiencing again his nervous tensions, André's ailments were coupled with attitudes of indifference and apathy. André was thirteen years of age. He now became aware of another attitude. He began to notice his feelings for his cousin: Madeleine Rondeaux.

André's feelings for Madeleine grew and had as their basis, not physical, but a moral stimulus:

> .... one evening, after he had gone home to his uncle Henri with whom he was staying, he did not find him there and returned to his uncle Emile's house, intending to take his cousins by surprise. He found no one about in the house but he crept softly upstairs to the girls' rooms and discovered Madeleine kneeling, weeping by her bedside. He was about to run away but she called to him and then revealed the cause of her grief. She had discovered the infidelity of her mother, she alone of all the family knew it, and she had to keep this to herself.[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 13.

[2] Enid Starkie, André Gide (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), pp. 13-14.

André was immediately attracted to her. He felt himself in love with her. They seemed to have had something in common. Not only was she suffering because of the discovery of her mother's infidelity, but she too, was the victime of a precarious health. She shared his passion for serious reading;

> They exchanged poems as they walked together in the woods of Meudon and Chantilly, and Gide confessed to his friend, what he had never yet told anyone, his love for Madeleine and his ambition to write a work which would enshrine that devotion; how he would show it to her, and how then she would love him and consent to marry him.[1]

Did André really love Madeleine? According to Wallace Fowlie, his feeling for Madeleine was a love of purity and idealism. As a result, André's feelings were divided in such a way that he could not associate his spiritual love with conjugal love, in the physical sense. He separated, even at this early age, love from desire. This love for Madeleine was at all times incompatible. He found it difficult to bring together the idealized love he held for her with a sexual love.

At the beginning of 1891, André Gide formally entered the literary world of Paris. He did this with the publication of Les Cahiers d'André Walter. Maurice Barrès, who was one of the most highly respected writers of that day, showed a great interest in Andre's first book. At a banquet that was given in honor of Jean Moréas, on February 2, Barrès introduced André to the symbolist poet, Mallarmé. Gide, like many of the younger men present at that banquet, idolized Mallarmé more than any other poet. On February 4, André left a copy of his book at Mallarmé's apartment, 89 rue de Rome. In the letter which accompanied the inscribed copy, he

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[1] Ibid., p. 15.

wrote:

> Vous m'avez appris la honte de mon livre, car vous avez chanté tous les vers que j''aurais rêve d'écrire.[1]

A few days later, Mallarmé invited Gide to attend one of the Tuesday evening gatherings of his cénacle. When André first started attending these gatherings, he welcomed the influence of the symbolist poet; however, he gradually began to drift away, and later rejected what seemed to him the sterile part of symbolism. In the famous apartment on the rue de Rome, André met other French writers, such as Pierre Louys -- whom he had already met, when in October, of 1887, they were in the same literature class at the Ecole Alsacienne. Pierre, before André came was the most brilliant student of his class; however, when André surpassed him during the second half of the year, the two became close friends, having as a common basis a love for literature and an ambition to become a writer. Léon-Paul Fargue, Paul Valéry, and Paul Claudel are other writers whom he met at these gatherings.

The influence of André's visitations to Mallarmé's cénacle can be observed in his Traité du Narcisse, which treats solipsim, along with Tentative amoureuse, which deals with the vanity of love, and Le Voyage d'Urien, which is concerned with the vanity of existence. He, however, after having broken with the symbolist school, in 1894, wrote Paludes, a satire on symbolism.

At this same period in his life, André attended the meetings of the Parnassian group held at Heredia's apartment on rue Balzac. Gide attended these gatherings less frequently. He strongly disliked the gossipy,

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[1] Ibid., p. 30.

throat-cutting overtone of the sessions held.

By June of 1891, André had befriended Paul Laurens, the son of a painter, who was one year younger than he. Paul was as shy as André and was equally interested in the arts. Paul received a scholarship in painting to study in Africa for one year. He asked André to accompany him.

The idea of this sojourn greatly thrilled Paul and André. They were both determined to look for sexual experiences. Neither of them had had any meaningful experiences previously. This was their big chance. Consequently, this trip entailed more than the arrangement of accommodations and securing tickets for them, it meant the opportunity to finally explore and seek out what their young minds had wanted to know so desparately. But more than Paul, André saw much more in this trip. He sincerely felt that he would be leaving behind him the old and acquiring the new. As Wallace Fowlie so beautifully wrote it:

> .... he fully believed that he was returning to life and reality, that he would emerge with anew personality, a reincarnation. He was leaving behind him a regime of morality, and was facing a natural life in which he would would make countless efforts toward a knowledge and an acquisition of joy.[1]

Paul Laurens and André Gide set sail from Marseille on the eighteenth of October, 1891, for Tunis. They arrived in Tunis. While there, André fell ill with a serious cold. He left Tunis for Sousse, leaving Paul behind. In Sousse, a physician diagnosed his malady as tuberculosis. There, on the edge of the desert, he had his first sexual adventure, with an Arab boy, Athman.[2] He continued this new experience upon his

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[1]Fowlie, André Gide: Op. Cit., p. 21.

[2]Ibid., p. 23.

arrival in Biskra, where he and Athman decided to take up their lodging.

When writing Les Cahiers d'André Walter, Gide had exposed some of the problems or ideas which had occupied his thoughts. He expressed the desire to break away from any form of morality that would prevent him from living as he wished. But he wanted to do this without feeling that he was sinning. He did not want to feel fear that would hold him back; but rather strength that would make him go forward. Was this the too strict morality that André wished to get away from when, before his departure for Africa, he wrote these thoughts in his novel? One is inclined to believe such thoughts highly possible.

In January, 1894, André arrived in Algeria, where he hoped to find the joy that he had literally shaken all old principles to find. He was disillusioned. He traveled on to a place named Blidah. Gide had been there only three days, when he decided to leave. That evening he went down to the lobby to get his hotel bill. While waiting, suddenly he noticed the blackboard which displayed the names of its current guests. The last two names listed on it were those of Oscar Wilde and Lord Alfred Douglas, from London.

Gide's immediate reaction was to wipe out his name and leave! He did not want to see anyone, least of all Wilde! He left. However, as soon as he reached the railroad station, he realized quite blushingly, the cowardness involved in what he had done. After all, he used to see a good deal of Wilde, three years ago, in Paris -- and how intensely he had enjoyed seeing him, at the time! He returned. He met Oscar Wilde and Lord Alfred Douglas. One evening, soon after Lord Douglas had left, Wilde carried André to a certain cafe and procured a boy for him. Gide

subsequently wrote that he had found with the youth a joy and serenity which he had never yet experienced! In this state of bliss he conceived Les Nourritures terrestres and wrote several passages of it; although it was not finished then, it belongs to this moment of happiness and freedom.[1]

André went to Biskra in February, 1895. His main purpose was to do some serious concentrated work, and not for the indulgence of sexual desires. However, he was happy to have Athman close to him again. He even made plans to carry him back to France with him. He wrote to his mother and Madeleine telling of his plans. They, of course, opposed his plans. They won the controversy; when Gide left Biskra, Athman did not accompany him.

André sought to break away from this too strict morality that he abhorred even in his choice of readings in the Bible. In his New Testament readings, he had turned away from the writings of Saint Paul, with their emphasis on moral stricture and doctrine, and had chosen the figure of Christ as presented by Saint John. In these writings, André could see the promise of joy, freedom, or liberty as prevailing over all else.[2]

On May 31, 1895, Mme. Paul Gide died from a stroke at La Roque. With the absence of this tyrannical force, this symbolic hand for morality and the traditions of her class, André saw in her death, the removal of a significant obstacle in the way of the new life which he had instituted for himself.[3] He was, at last, a free and independent spirit that

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[1]Klaus Mann, André Gide and the Crisis of Modern Thought (New York: Stratford Press, Inc., 1943), p. 80.

[2]Fowlie, Op. cit., p. 28.

[3]Ibid., p. 28.

could choose and live by his own guidelines. He did just that. But first, he needed someone to share his new life with him; on June 17, 1895, he and Madeleine announced their engagement.

In Et nunc manet in te, André tells of consulting a doctor about his future marriage. He had become extremely worried over his strong traits of homosexuality and his tendency to try and justify his sexual practices. His erotic experiences in Africa had, seemingly, influenced him greatly. It appears that the autoerotic practices that had become a constant diversion with him as a child were merely minute compared to his present traits. Despite his misgivings, however, André and Madeleine were married.

This marriage remained unconsummated. During the wedding trip, particularly in Italy and Africa, Madeleine became aware of her husband's attraction to boys. André was already aware of this attraction. He even had a certain type that appealed to him. According to Wallace Fowlie: "he knew he was strongly attracted to ... the vagabond and the prowler, the boy who was an outcast from society."

André never really wanted to admit to himself that he was emotionally incapable of loving Madeleine as a man loves a woman. He never accepted the idea that his love was not real, but a deep spiritual experience. Even to the day of her death in 1938, he felt that his love for Madeleine had been real.

Was André wrong in desiring such freedom? Should he be free to love whomever he wanted? Should he have to conform to the standards already set by society? Or should he as an individual be able to charter his own course? He found solace in his readings of Dostoievski.

According to Maurice Got, the relationship between Gide and Dostoievski was more of une influence plus personnelle, plus intime. Dostoievski saw man "en quête de soi-même comme il est en quête des choses."[1]

> Je suis entré dans Nietzche malgré moi; Je l'attendais avant de le connaître.[2]

The above citation illustrates the influence exerted on Gide by Friedrich Nietzche, the German philosopher, who believed in "l'élan joyeux de la vie." From his readings on Nietzche, he again found solace.

> ... se connaître, c'est en vivant, devenir peu à peu ce que l'on est, dégager de ce qui n'est pas soi l'individualité véritable, déchirer par lambeaux le masque.[3]

One of the most powerful organs of young writers, and what is, even today, considered the literary review par excellence, La Nouvelle Revue Francaise, was founded by Gide in 1909. This literary review influenced the social convictions of many youth of the early twentieth century.

In 1926, he went to the Congo, where he observed the cruel exploitation of the natives. This caused him to give great consideration to the communist doctrines. He went to Moscow; but he was horrified by the perversion of communist ideals in the Soviet Union. Upon his return to Paris he announced that in no country was the spirit more oppressed, terrorized, or vassalized than in Russia. He concluded, after this venture into politics, that the reformation of institutions is futile.

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[1]Maurice Got, André Gide: Une Expérience spirituelle (Paris: Imprime en France, 1964), p. 46.

[2]Ibid., p. 51.

[3]Ibid., p. 46.

A reformation of the spirit of men was what was needed!

André Gide was highly respected, influential in many ways, and practically idolized by some, but was never elected to the Académie Française. He did however, receive due recognition, when in 1948, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature.

In noting some of the works of André Gide, it is found that they are vast in bulk. His works vary in form from poems to novels, critiques, plays and travel notes. He even wrote polemics. Of course, Gide's most influential form was, and still is, prose fiction. Gide's prose fiction differed from others because of his style. He did not have a plot around which to drape his story. His narrations were never so organized that a reader could predict the next occurrence; nor did he ever use the traditional conclusion. Of his more popular works of prose fiction, the following depict or epitomize his style: (a) The récit, which analyses character from a single point of view. Such an analysis becomes a critique of individual behavior in a certain defined situation. The neroes and heroines of the récit all seem to over-develop a single virtuous trait in their personalities to the exclusion of everything else. Such obsessions lead them subsequently to disappointment and despair. For example, in La Porte etroite (which was written in 1909) a young woman epitomizes an overdose of virtue in the form of self-sacrifice. Or as in L'Immoraliste (which was written in 1902) where a young man exemplifies an overdose of concern for immoralistic tendencies. (b) The sotie, which deals with the problem of living. It does not limit itself to a special aspect of life as does the récit. It is also more symbolic than the récit. It teaches two very different lessons,

one by implication and the other by demonstration. The sotie deals almost entirely with a world of make-believe. In Les Caves du Vatican (which was written in 1914) the dilemmas which eventually confront an unauthentic character, is seen as an example of the sotie. (c) The roman, which gives a panoramic view of society. The roman analyses the reactions of groups of individuals to conventions which circumscribe their existence. The one and only example of this type work is Les Faux-monnayeurs, which was written in 1926.[1]

André Gide died in Paris on February 19, 1951. He was buried at Cuverville on February 22, 1951.

According to Wallace Fowlie, Gide firmly believed that as a man can neither realize himself nor the divine in himself or in the world, unless he is free to live the experience of the instant. This, he felt, is the only way of self-knowledge, the way of gradually becoming what one is. This idea, as expressed by Fowlie, will be used for the study to be conducted in the following chapter.

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[1]André Gide, Les Caves du Vatican, ed. by F. J. Jones (London: University of London Press, 1961), pp. 10-11.

CHAPTER II

LES NOURRITURES TERRESTRES

> J'attends un crak monstre dans ma famille à l'apparition des Nourritures; joy travaille assez exaspérément.[1]

In this letter, written in October of 1896 by André Gide to Paul Valéry, is mentioned what was, and perhaps still is, one of the most controversial and influential books of the early twentieth century.

According to Jean Delay, André's idea for a book always preceded the workings of his imagination, and although he had had the idea for Les Nourritures terrestres before his departure for Africa in October, 1891, he was able to imagine it only because of the wealth of sensations collected during his years of travel. In his preface to the German translation of his book, he specified that it had been written in 1895. He had begun to think about it in 1893, for the Journal and the Feuillets of that year are filled with phrases characteristic of his mood -- "I want to speak here of life for life's sake."

In a translation of a letter that Gide wrote to his mother in 1895, Jean Delay quoted him as saying:

I now feel that my youth is over. In this book I'm planning

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[1]André Gide, Correspondance: Andre Gide - Paul Valéry, 1890-1942, ed. by Mailet, VI (Paris: Gallimard Sebastian Botlin, 1955), p. 282.

> to write, I should like to bury it altogether. I feel myself maturing and ready for more serious and stronger works.[1]

Les Nourritures terrestres was published in Paris in 1897. "Ce livre de jeunesse," "Ce manual d'évasion et de délivrance"[2] represents Gide's effort to achieve greater self-knowledge. According to Wallace Fowlie in:

> André Gide: His Life and Arts, Gide purposed that at the genesis of every reform, usually there was a dissatisfaction, an illness, or a discomfort. As a consequence, what ever the particularized private problem of one man may be, it is highly possible that he can help lead to the creation of a universal thought that will be felt by countless others.[3]

In the preface of the edition of 1927 of Les Nourritures terrestres, Gide calls his book a manual of escape, the book of a sick man or of one who has just recovered from a long illness and who feverishly longs to live again and know all the excesses of living:

> Les Nourritures terrestres sont le livre, sinon d'un guéri-de quelqu'un qui a été malade. Il y a, dans son lyrisme même, l'excès de celui qui embrasse la vie comme quelque chose qu'il a failli perdre.[4]

André sees his book as an apology for asceticism or renuciation.[5] In this dissertation or as it is called in French, traité, André describes the three stages that the reader should pass through in reading his book;

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[1]John Delay, The Youth of André Gide (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 458.

[2]Paul Archambault, Humanite d'André Gide (Moyenne: Imprimerie Floch, 1950), p. 79.

[3]Fowlie, Op. cit., p. 30.

[4]André Gide, Les Nourritures terrestres, suivi de Les Nouvelles Nourritures (Paris: Gallimard, 1936), p. 11.

[5]Fowlie, Op. cit., p. 36.

namely, the reading of this book should turn the reader back to himself, there should be a new interest developed in self, and there should be an engrossment in everything else in the world, that is, everything that is not the book and himself:

> Que mon livre t'enseigne à t'intéresser plus à toi qu'à lui-même, -- puis a tout le reste plus qu'à toi.[1]

Les Nourritures terrestres is structured as a monologue. The narrator speaks to the youth, Nathanael. Nathanael is passive. Gide, on the other hand, was taught during his adolescence, by Ménalque. An older and much wiser Gide, now feels it only fair that he imparts to Nathanael the results of his instruction. Gide informs the reader, of course, that neither of the characters are real.[2] They are merely figments of his imagination. But, to construct his work, this is the way he chose to convey his ideas.

The book contains a series of theories, themes, philosophical ideas or commentaries which make up this spiritual autobiography by Gide. These commentaries, which shall be cited later, follow no logical plan and are presented in eight books. Gide uses a Hymne section immediately following the eight books as a type of conclusion. Symbolically, making an allusion to the stars he gives the notion of failure in his quest for a new life. The Hymne section is followed by the Envoi section which reminds one of the ballads written by the poets of the middle ages. In this particular section the poets always recapitulated the dominant

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[1] Gide, Les Nourritures terrestres, p. 13.

[2] Germaine Bree, Gide (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1963), p. 34.

ideas of the work.

There is a message which lies behind the commentaries found in Les Nourritures terrestres. It is given to us by the narrator. He seems, however, to be invisible. He refuses to define himself in any recognizable way. He seemingly enjoys engaging in long bouts of confiding in the reader and talks, in detail, about his varied sensations.

Gide's contact with the world is purely emotional and draws heavily on literary heroes or characters.[1] He makes references to such figures as Helen, Lynceus, Boccaccio, Saul, Bathsheba, and Theseus. One finds hovering in the background, such personalities as Goethe and Nietzche.[2]

Les Nourritures terrestres evidences greatly Gide's familiarity with the African milieu. This is indicative of his new mood, his prerogative to have verses throughout the book that are deliberately composed to give an impression of free improvisation.[3] One sees such words as "mosques," and "caravans," such names as Athman, Oumach, Droh, and Zaghouan, and discussions or descriptions of such landscapes as that of Blidah, Amar Khadou, and Sahel. These are all found in his extremely lyrical poetry, especially in Book Eight -- this particular part of Gide's work is often referred to as his travelogue.

The themes developed in Les Nourritures terrestres have two origins; namely, the great voluptuous exaltation which accompanied the first exotic

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[1]Ibid., p. 68.

[2]Ibid., p. 98.

[3]Ibid., p. 70.

experiences Gide had and his contemplative serenity as a well-cared for convalescent. He was surrounded only by what was beneficial: thirst and the quenching of thirst, the feel of sun or of water on the skin, light and a sense of the beauty of all things.

All the themes of Les Nourritures terrestres are issued, conceived, for the most part and felt from the oasis, Blidah, which represents an allegory -- or symbol -- of rebirth for Gide. These themes can be classified as ethical, rejectional and sensuous.[1] The traité deviates entirely from the symbolist pattern and disregards the basic principles of the movement -- namely, the supremacy of idea and symbol, in brief, of the abstract over reality. He glorifies all forms of passion and joy.[2]

Les Nourritures terrestres recounts a series of personal experiences. It is the account of a soul in the midst of things that are gathered in groups and are in the plural, such things as gardens, doors, springs, fruits, ships, caravans, deserts, and landscapes. They seem to pass by swiftly in succession. Once a particular thing is discussed, it disappears to make room for another.

The ideas and emotions expressed in this traité are expressed in the first person. There are neither projections into the future nor reflections back upon the past.

The words most frequently used by Gide to emphasize his sensual excitements are ferveur, volupté, ivresse, désir, seif, disponibilité,

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[1]Ibid., p. 72.

[2]Klaus Mann, André Gide and the Crisis of Modern Thought (New York: Stratford Press, Inc., 1943), p. 86.

le perpetuelle noveauté, liberté and aventure. All these are indicative of the nouvel être. They emphatically convey his ideas. To illustrate or rather convey the depth of his sensations, his favorite verb seems to be, brûler. For example, in his Hymne section, where stars symbolically represent man, he states thatfor man "un zèle exquis les brûle et les consume."[1]

This traité, in essence, is the search for "le bonheur impossible des âmes." From time immortal, man has always had inner desires which lie dormant within him due to inhibitions or limitations already set by society. This brings about, therefore, a struggle within the soul of the man.

Some of the greatest and most perplexing limitations and problems of man stem from his religious beliefs. Gide was no exception. He shows the supremacy of this type of struggle by using it as the very first theme he discusses in his work.

According to D. L. Thomas, Gide's religious tendencies are of the simplest kind: A natural pahtheism[2]:

> Ne souhait pas ... trouver Dieu ailleur que partout.
> Chaque créature ... où que tu ailles ... ne peux
> rencontrer que Dieu.[3]

Here Gide tells Nathanael, whose name means "a gift of God," that he can find God everywhere; that all creatures and all things are

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[1]Gide, Les Nourritures terrestres, p. 167.

[2]D. L. Thomas, Andre Gidé, the Ethic of the Artist (London: Secker and Warburg, 1950), p. 82.

[3]Gide, Les Nourritures terrestres, pp. 19-20.

indicative of Him. God not only represents everything for him; but he is summa bonnum of happiness.

> Ne distinque pas Dieu du bonheur ... J'ai nommé
> Dieu tout ce que j'aime.[1]

With a religion which encompasses God as everything, and all creatures indicative of Him, it is only natural that all moral actions are good. He adopts, what D. L. Thomas calls a non-moral ethic. After all, what can be classified as bad in a pantheist's world?:

> Agir sans juger si l'action est bonne ou mauvaise.
> Aimer sans s'inquieter si c'est le bien ou le mal.[2]

It follows, therefore, that in his world, sin no longer exists.[3] Gide justifies his stand, when he wrote:

> Supprimer en soi l'idee de mérite; il y a là un
> grand achopement pour l'esprit.[4]

Consequently whenever a man, who is outside of the pantheist's world, begins to consider whether an action should be labeled good or bad, he automatically attaches, somewhere along the way, value to it. This value he attaches is mérite. This Gide feels can serve as a "stumbling block." The criterion of value for an action is, for him, the pleasure which it yields: "Chaque action parfaite s'accompange de volupté."[5] Individualism has been defined as the leading of one's life

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[1] Ibid., p. 30.

[2] Ibid., p. 21.

[3] Ibid., p. 20.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., p. 39.

in one's own way without regard for others. If one is to accept what Gide says and does, then he is an individualist. He formulated his own doctrines in life about such things as the significance of the past, marriage, education, families, and the distribution of compassion or pity.

As an individualist, Gide was, what shall be labeled, a rejectionist.

> Ne désire jamais ... regoûter les eaux du passe ... Ne cherche pas, ... à retrouver jamais le passe. Saisis de chaque instant la nouveauté irressemblable et ne prépare pas tes joies, ou sache qu'en son lieu prépare te surprendre une jois autre.[1]

The above citation is illustrative of a mood that will be labeled as Gide's themes of rejection. Unlike his contemporary, Marcel Proust, Gide felt that one should reject all past experiences or even the recall of stages in one's life left behind, as indices to la perpetuelle Nouveauté. Live the present for the present. Seize each moment for the totality that it contains. Making plans for future joys is taboo. This is where disappointment lies, usually satisfaction felt at one time becomes quite a different thing at another.

According to Van Meter Ames:

> ... marriage for Gide represents the Jewish - Christian prohibitions and taboos. He traveled with his bride as he would have done without her, and he seemed to declare an independence that only he could imagine. He believes that one should learn to love life before putting on blinkers. At least when one has been brought up a puritan it is well to go to graze a while and forget that a harness will have to be worn later.[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 40.

[2] Van Meter Ames, André Gide (Norfolk: Vail-Ballou Press, 1947), pp. 34-35.

This idea of rejection can also be easily attached to Gide's conception of love. When a sensation is felt, when an understanding exists, when a passion makes one feel la totalité de ... bien, who is to say that all favors, caresses, or the entirety of all thoughts be directed to the hetero or homo sex? Is it not convention or tradition that dictates most individuals' actions? Therefore, to agree with the real inner self, one can reject all taboos -- whether they are social or moral -- that may lead to being insincere to oneself. Regardless of the recipient of love, for Gide it had to be trusted. The secret of any love is faith in human promise:

> It is the free gift of God. It unlocks the door of possibility. Love is unselfish and adventurous. It is kind. It must be cultivated beyond the household, whether frustration is there or not. Love is too expensive to be fulfilled at home, in the best home, for the role of the love is to move the world as nothing else will. Love is fused with the pioneering love of knowledge and progress. This love ... leads out of the swamps of puritanism, past the gardens of paganism, to a creative future.[1]

Because Gide rejected the moralities imposed by man, he even in his personal life, was a sympathizer with the nomadic inclined individual. He felt that this kind of vagabond existence provided man with much more knowledge, that is, through experience.

According to D. L. Thomas:

> ... travel was also for Gide, a symbol of escape. Through escape, as he pointed out in his work, he could get to know himself better. Travel was a symbol of liberty, adventure, and most especially to him, it meant perpetually renewed

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[1] Ibid., pp. 76-77.

> sensations and a chance for variety. Travel offered the solace of solitude during his moments of tribulation. Travel removed any attachments, it offered dispossession. Travel went even beyond effort, curiosity; it provided a discovery of the complex, changing self, in ever changing situations. It combated restlessness, impatience, and inconstancy.[1]

The family appears to be a symbol of restriction that is criticized or rejected by Gide. One's liberty is limited due to the attachments involved. Such attachments hamper the freedom necessary for the fulfillment of a life of sensations. Because of this, Gide says:

> Familles, je vous hais! Foyers clos; portes refermées; possessions jalouses du bonheur.[2]

Attraction of one individual to another is usually based on some striking characteristic of that person. From the eye of the beholder, it is this trait which makes this human being very different from others. If then, this trait makes him so different, it follows that a common trait, an emotion such as sympathy, is forbidden in Gide's world. Love, on the other hand, is permissible:

> Non point la sympathie, Nathanael, l'amour. C'est par peur d'une perte d'amour que parfois j'ai pu sympathiser avec des tristes ses, des ennuis, des douleurs que sinon je n'aurais qu'à peine endures. Laisse à chacun le soin de sa vie.[3]

Hedonism is defined as a doctrine which holds that pleasure is the principle good, and should be the aim of action. This definition summarizes the sensuous themes scattered throughout Les Nourritures terrestres. These themes -- each of which shall be explained -- are

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[1]Thomas, Op. cit., p. 90.

[2]Gide, Les Nourritures terrestres, pp. 69-70.

[3]Ibid., p. 22.

encompassed in such terms as ferveur, volupté, attente, aventure, or liberté, solitude, and la perpetuelle nouveauté or la disponibilité.

According to Maurice Got, for Nietzche, "la ferveur ... est tout ce qui compte car elle se renouvelle et la maladie l'alimente."[1] This is, in essence, Gide's conception of ferveur. He perceives it as the vehicle by which he can extract the most out of life. It is that which enriches him "plus que la possession toujours fausse de l'objet même de mon désir."[2] It is also that which results from the splendeur of love:

> Toute ferveur m'était une usure d'amour, une usure delicieuse.[3]

According to Germaine Brée, Gide's ferveur is his hymn to a happiness surging because of the release of inner forces previously dormant within him. However, once he has released these inner forces, without the proper response, it results in melancholy which is only relapsed fervor.

To Gide, the enjoyment of each moment as if it were the totality of life is what he calls volupté. He even goes so far as to equate it with le bien être. This total enjoyment becomes the I that has learned to live a succession of separate moments of delight:

> ... je pris ... d'habitude de séparer chaque instant de ma vie, pour une totalité de joie, isolée, ... de sorte que je ne me renconaissais plus dès le plus récent souvenir.[4]

Such a constant delight of life, seems, over a span of time, to distort

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[1]Maurice Got, André Gide: Une Expérience spirituelle (Paris: Imprime en France, 1964), p. 50.

[2]Gide, Les Nourritures terrestres, p. 21.

[3]Ibid., p. 21.

[4]Ibid., p. 46.

the memory of the partaker.

Since Gide equates volupté with being itself, one can see why he concludes that life is most deeply enjoyed in the waiting for this volupté. Many times while waiting for this moment of ecstasy, he experiences different kinds of attentes. There are times when he is so sad, worried, or just miserable, that even sleep cannot cure him. Gide admits, that "il y a des attentes nocturnes d'on [sic] ne sait encor quel amour."[1] He eagerly awaits these hours of joy. If he is not satisfied, it is in vain for him to search for sleep.

Adventure and liberty to Gide are the vehicles for becoming more acquainted with love. They are the vehicles also which acquaint Gide with the type of individual to whom he is attracted:

> Je me suis fait rôdeur pour pouvoir frôler tout ce qui rôde: ... j'ai passionnement aime tout ce qui vagabonde.[2]

In looking for the source of Gide's adventurous and libertine nature, it is found that he considers books as the fountain from which gushes all his ideas à propos to freedom and adventure. Books provide him with intellectual light. They alone enable him to realize the advantages of adventure and liberty.

That which causes Gide to be in the proper frame of mind to become this newly enlightened being, is seen when he tells Nathanael:

> Don du poète, ... tu es le don de perpetuelle rencontre ... mon âme était l'auberge ouverte au carrefour; ce qui voulait entrer, entrait. Je me suis fait ductile, à l'amiable disponible par tous mes sens, attentifs.[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 53.

[2] Ibid., p. 159.

[3] Ibid., p. 69.

This is la disponibilité.

Gide had a horror of solitude. When alone, it seems as if he was plagued by inner thoughts that threatened or challenged his already - established doctrines. During these moments of loneliness, his train of thought ran from regrets, doubts, and even to fear:

> ... solitude; être seul en moi, c'est n'être plus personne; je suis peuplé.[1]

Each of Gide's themes - ethical, rejectional and sensuous - presented in Les Nourritures terrestres has been discussed. In the work, Gide, serving as the narrator, advances each of his ideas, taught to him by Ménalque, to Nathanael. The reader is introduced for the first time to Ménalque in Book One. He recounts his life story to Gide. This life story, as shall be seen, is an illustration of each of the themes aforementioned.

Having been brought up very strictly, Ménalque, upon reaching adolescence, freed himself to seek, alone, the ways of freedom. He even went so far as to free himself from all moral teachings to which he had been subjected. He felt that the laws and conventions that govern an individual deform him. Thus, one who does not dare to be a non-conformist, is one who really does not dare to be himself. Ménalque rebels against all pre-established rules, customs, and attachments. He yearns to make his own destiny. Any attachments to him are a sign of slavery and any faithfulness as a kind of prison. On the other hand, there are times when he felt himself about to accept these values.

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[1] Ibid., p. 155.

According to Jean Delay, Ménalque detested men of principles. Good and evil, according to him, are artificial notions established by religious authorities to deprive man of his freedom. They keep him from living according to that which is original and unique in his own individual destiny. Living, to Ménalque, means choosing. Man must make a choice. This is what, of course, troubles him. Why should he have to choose? How is or when is he to know which decision is the right one? There is no need for separating one compartment from the other. All of life is excellent. Ménalque no longer believes in sin. He professes to love and adore pleasure, which makes him a hedonist. He believes in living in the moment, for the moment, void of responsibilities or guilt-feelings. He wants to live as "free as the birds in the sky." He is, thus guided by sensations.

A comparison of the ideas attributed to Ménalque and those of André Gide may lead one to conclude that Ménalque is Gide. According to John Delay, this is not so. He substantiates his conclusion by quoting from Gide's Journal, which was published in 1935.

> Jef [sic] Last finds fault with Ménalque's ethics. He is right. I myself disapprove of it and even at that time, presenting it only with reservations, I made a point of giving the responsibility of it to another. That is true; but my partial disapproval remains almost imperceptible and what little irony I thought I had put into certain sentences ... is not sufficiently brought out.[1]

In his envoi section, where Gide pleads with Nathanael to quitte-moi, jette mon livre, he gives the substance of his ideas. He admonishes Nathanael to seek absolute independence. This he should do because

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[1]Delay, The Youth of André Gide, p. 462.

truth can only be found by one's self. He wanted him to make a new, fresh start by rejecting all past knowledge, keeping only what is "nulle part ailleurs qu'en toi-même, et crée de toi, ... Ah! le plus irremplacable des êtres."[1]

To conclude, a summary of the philosophy advocated by Ménalque shall be enumerated in order to point out the main themes of Les Nourritures terrestres. Ménalque advocates that one should:

1. Break away from all restricting social conventions.
2. Free one's self from the moral teachings of elders.
3. Be a non-conformist. Conforming to the laws and conventions that may govern an individual usually deforms him.
4. Make a clean sweep of all pre-established rules and customs to follow one's own destiny.
5. Abhor men of principles. Good and evil do not exist of their own; they are established by social or religious authorities.
6. Avoid attachments. They are enslaving and hamper the blossoming of the inner-self.
7. Live and make ones own choices.
8. Be guided by sensations. Do not believe in sin. Be void of all guilt-feelings. Love and adore pleasure.

In chapter three, an attempt will be made to indicate how the philosophy that Ménalque advocates in Les Nourritures terrestres is applied to the life of Michel in L'Immoraliste.

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[1]Gide, Les Nourritures terrestres, p. 169.

CHAPTER III

L'IMMORALISTE

> Je donne ce livre pour ce qu'il vaut. C'est un fruit plein de cendre amere.[1]

The above citation is the beginning of L'Immoraliste, which is a novelistic application of all the theories, philosophies, and principles that Gide so poetically expounded in Les Nourritures terrestres.

In his Journal entry of July 12, 1914, he stated that the idea for this book had been on his mind for at least fifteen years before he wrote it. He revealed that he had been carrying concurrently in his thought the ideas for three books, L'Immoraliste, La Porte étroite, and Les Caves du Vatican. He was to write each of these at different times. They were, however, to treat the very same theme; but, he wanted each of them to seem, at least on casual reading, very different one from the other. L'Immoraliste corresponded more to his past than his present state of mind; it was a transposition of his experiences that were over. Gide completed L'Immoraliste in October, 1901. It was published by Mercure de France in 1902.

L'Immoraliste is written in the form of a letter that is supposedly

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[1]André Gide, L'Immoraliste (Paris: Brodard et Taupin, 1963), p. 7.

the verbatum account of a narration of the central character, Michel, to four friends. Michel relates only events. He does not make any judgments. He seems to use this narration of events in his life as a means and not an end. The end, hopefully, is for him to reach an understanding of himself. One may even be lead to believe that he really wants his friends to give him the answer.

In L'Immoraliste, there are active rather than passive characters. Michel, as opposed to Nathanael of Les Nourritures terrestres, speaks. Not only does he speak, but he reveals the inner thoughts of his mind to his reader. He unfolds the inner thoughts of his wife, Marceline. He interprets her actions.

L'Immoraliste is not a psychological analysis. This is due to the fact that Michel, while relating various events, facts, or moods, is unable to explain them. Then one can see cause for his state of confusion:

> Je suis à tel point de ma vie que je ne peux plus dépasser ... J'ai besoin de parler.[1]

The writer shall first summarize the plot of L'Immoraliste. The writer shall then show how each of the themes, philosophies and ideas found in Les Nourritures terrestres are applied in the life of Michel in L'Immoraliste. Michel, a young, wealthy archeologist commences his tale, as stated:

> Simplement, sans modestie et sans orgueil, plus simplement que si je parlais a moi-même.[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 17.

[2] Ibid.

As a child, Michel was molded by the Huguenot teachings of his mother, who died when he was fifteen. He was thus left to be brought up by his father. His father was an atheist, and was immersed in the study of the past. This love for the past is what he tried, through innumerable travels and extensive reading, to instill in Michel. Michel confesses that until the age of twenty-five, he had looked at nothing except books and ruins. At the age of twenty-five, also, Michel married his childhood friend, an orphan, Marceline. Michel did this at the request of a dying father: "Je l'avais epousée sans amour."[1]

The young couple leave for their honeymoon in Africa. They go first to Biskra. While in Biskra, Michel falls ill with tuberculosis. He nearly dies, but recovers. Michel and Marceline leave Biskra for Normandy via Italy.

Michel was offered a professorship at the Collège de France, in Paris. He accepted this high academic honor. Michel prepared his lectures with the greatest enthusiasm -- he delivered each of them in this manner. At this same time, Marceline was expecting a baby. She lost the child. She fell ill with tuberculosis, a year later. Michel had to resign his poisition at the Collège de France. Their estate in La Moriniere was put up for sale. Michel wanted to return to the South. They left Normandy. From there they went to Switzerland, Italy and to Africa. They finally sojourned back to Biskra. They left Biskra and went even further south to Touggort. It was in Touggort, exhausted

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[1] Ibid., p. 18.

from so much traveling that Marceline died.

Before her death, Marceline revealed something to Michel that he thought he had been able to hide from her. She told him that she had been aware of a new personality in his life. What was this new personality? What changes had evolved in Michel? From the above resume one could assume that he and she lead a perfectly normal life, except for the illnesses they both suffered. Of course this is not true. There had been a change made in Michel's life. His personality, his ideas, thoughts, everything about him had changed. He now had a nouvel être.

It is now the responsibility of the writer to show that which fostered the change in Michel's life. This shall be done by showing how the ideas, principles and themes expounded in Les Nourritures terrestres are actually exemplified in the character and thoughts of Michel. Not only this, but how each of the characters that Michel encounters in L'Immoraliste is representative of one of the ideas advocated by Ménalque of Les Nourritures terrestres.

One shall return to the young couple in Biskra. One feels deeply that the spark for Michel's nouvel être was lighted there.

One morning while Michel was sitting in their apartment at Biskra, Marceline joyously brought a little Arab boy home with her. Bachir was small in stature. He was the epitome of health. He lived each moment of life as it came to him. Even the most trivial thing for others, received his undivided attention.

Bachir's presence, at first, angered Michel. Suddenly, however, his presence no longer angered or bored Michel. He even went so far as to get the whistle that Bachir was so contently amusing himself with:

"Je ... le prends et feins de l'admirer beaucoup."[1]

Bachir was about to leave for home. Marceline gave him a piece of cake. Michel gave him two sous. Why? Was this his first step in exemplifying the potentialities of a nouvel être? May one be lead to believe that he was buying the favors of Bachir? That he wished to complement his ill-health with this portrait of health itself? Or that he wished to learn fully to enjoy each moment of his life with the same innocence, the same relaxed mind and the same guilt-free conscious as Bachir?

The next day, for the first time, Michel noticed that he was bored: "... j'attends, j'attend quoi? Je me sens désoeuvré, inquiet."[2] Bachir did not return. He wanted to go to look for him; Marceline went instead. She returned, but without Bachir. This made Michel sad.

However, the very next day, Bachir returned. Again Michel was charmed by him. But this time, Michel began to feel ill. He had Marceline take Bachir away. Alone, his coughing became worse; he suffered miserably.

Abruptly, in the midst of his misery, Michel relates that:

> ... un désir, une envie, quelque chose de plus furieux, de plus impérieux que tout ce que j'avais ressenti jusqu'alors: Vivre! Je veux vivre.[3]

Michel receives a sudden urge to want to totally enjoy life. One is able to surmise that this was the beginning of his nouvel être. One may thus

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[1] Ibid., p. 33.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 35.

conclude that Bachir served as a symbol. Bachir represented the ideas of volupté and ferveur that were discussed in Les Nourritures terrestres: happiness of each moment as being totality of life. He also symbolizes an idea advocated by Ménalque (of Les Nourritures terrestres) that one should be guided by one's sensations and be void of any and all guilt-feelings.

Toward the end of January, being temporarily confined due to bad weather conditions, Michel finds himself alone in his bedroom with Moktir, who is another Arab boy. As Michel stands in front of a mirror with his back toward him, he observes Moktir approach. He approaches near a table where Marceline had left a pair of scissors. Moktir believed Michel to be engaged in his reading. Quickly he hid the scissors in his burnos. Observing this entire scene, one would think that Michel was enraged. Quite to the contrary, Michel relates that:

> Mon coeur battit avec force un instant, mais les plus sages raissonements ne purent faire aboutir en moi le moindre sentiment de révolte.[1]

Why did Michel not wish to reprimand Moktir? Michel gives a hint when he says: "à partir de ce jour, Moktir devient mon préferé."[2] Moktir became his favorite by the mere fact that he went against existing ethical standards. He was an individualist. Seeing Marceline's scissors laying on the table, ordinarily, the conformist would have let them remain there. The conformists would reason somewhat along this line: He had been befriended and even fed by Marceline. Why should he show

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[1] Ibid., p. 53.

[2] Ibid., p. 54.

his gratitude by stealing from her? Moktir, on the other hand, had a certain freedom from ethical restraints. This is what Michel admired subconsciously.

Though this incident seems insignificant, it is the second step in the evolution of the nouvel être that plagued the soul of Michel. Michel now has another impetus, Moktir. Moktir represents the theme of rejection found in Les Nourritures terrestres. He also exemplifies the ideas advocated by Ménalque to break away from moral teachings of elders; that is, he is a non-conformist. He dictates his own actions. He is not ruled by the customs and rules set by social or religious authorities.

Michel and Marceline leave Biskra, enroute to Normandy via Italy. In Italy, they stay in Sorrente for awhile. While they are in Sorrente, a rebirth for the study of history occured in Michel. He began his studies by considering the influence of the Goths on the deformation of the Latin language. He limited himself to the last years of the Gothic Empire. Michel was attracted by the young king, Athalaric. Michel revealed that which drew him to Athalaric:

> Cet enfant de quinze ans ... se révolter contre sa mère Amalasonthe, ... son éducation latine, rejeter la culture ... et, préferant la société des Goths impolicés à celle du trop sage et vieux Cassiodore, goûter, ... une vie violente, voluptueuse, et débridée, pour mourir à dix-huit ans, tout gâte soûle de débauches.[1]

Again, Michel is attracted by the person who rejects traditions. Not only that, but he is attracted by one who refuses social limitations, even in education.

Michel and Marceline leave Sorrente and move to Naples. One day

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[1] Ibid., p. 54.

while they were in Naples, they received a letter which informed Michel that the chair of History at the Collège de France was vacant and he was offered this post. Michel accepted. This was an opportunity to expose his new ideas on the rejection of the past.

In July, they arrived at La Morinière. This was the country estate where Michel and Marceline were to live while he gave his lectures at the Collège de France. It was at this estate that Michel was to meet Charles, the son of the overseer of La Morinière, for the first time.

Michel had heard much of Charles before his arrival. Charles' father had often spoken of him to Michel. Michel had not been particularly impressed. However, on the day of Charles' arrival, Michel was suddenly attracted to him because of his youthful appearance.

Michel became strongly attached to Charles. He especially admired his strength, his know-how about farming, and his courage for taming wild animals. He began, more and more, to enjoy the moments they spent surveying, alone that is, his estate at La Morinière. He began to look forward to these moments with anxiety. Their rides became longer and longer. Several times, Michel did not return until noon. However, often he tried to return at the very moment that Marceline was getting out of bed. Even then, as he related:

> Je rentrais ivre d'air, étourdi de vitesse, les membres engourdis d'un peu de voluptueuse lassitude, l'esprit plein de santé, d'appétit, de fraîcheur.[1]

The moments Michel spent with Charles are what he terms happiness, not love. For him, happiness and love are different. Happiness is not

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[1] Ibid., p. 86.

essential for love. He felt happiness more important for it was experienced without the accompaniment of sympathy or compassion.

One may now begin to see a gradual development of that part of Michel's nature which has become urgent in its demands, the part one recognizes as the nouvel etrê. It is beginning, more and more, to replace that part of his nature which clings to traditionalism. It is moving slowly but very surely, from a dormant or latent state to a very alive and active one. In this state of mind, Michel went to Paris, to deliver his lectures at the Collège de France. Michel emphasized in his lectures all of his newly found ideas on life. His main objective in his lectures was to show how a man's culture was born of life and is killed by life. That is, it is man-made and is man-destroyed.

At his first lecture, Michel saw seated in the audience, an old acquaintance whom he had not seen for years. This person, Ménalque, was an archeologist and had been an associate of Michel and his father because of common scholarly interests. Ménalque's presence at this first lecture was flattering to Michel.

Ménalque, who was a vagabond by nature, was presently the target of all newspaper commentators. He was involved in "un honteux procès a scandale."[1] Ménalque was not irritated at all by what he read about himself. On the other hand, his indifferent attitude irritated the reporters.

Despite the fact that the articles were meant to defile him; yet,

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[1] Ibid., p. 103.

Ménalque credited his adaptability to the situation to a certain philosophy:

> Il faut ... laisser les autres avoir raison, puisque cela les console de n'avoir pas autre chose.[1]

Michel was strongly drawn to Ménalque because of this stand. Could it have been because Ménalque obviously refused to submit himself to the reasoning of men and because he made his own decisions? Michel felt himself being attracted to this social rebel.

Ménalque invited Michel to dine with him the evening of his class lecture. Michel accepted. That night, Ménalque expressed his philosophy of life:

> Je cherche dans l'iveresse une exaltation et non une diminution de la vie.[2]

Ménalque related to Michel why he admired him. Before arriving in Paris, he had been in Biskra. There he learned, from Moktir, of Michel's promenades in the garden with the young Arab boys, and less frequently with his wife. He also noted how such a change in actions implied the birth of a new being.

Three weeks after this dinner engagement, Ménalque surprisingly appeared at a party given by Michel and Marceline. Michel had had time to reflect on what Ménalque had told him. They began to chat. Naturally, the conversation immediately became centered around Michel's problem of conformity or non-conformity. Whether he would let his new being or the laws of society govern his actions. Whether he would experience <u>volupté</u>

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[1] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 105.

[2] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 107.

or the fervor that was being born within him. How long would he wait? Would he let family attachments, his wife, or his formal education stop him?

To show Michel why he was really hesitating to venture out, to live as he wanted to, Ménalque symbolically used the guests that were at the party:

> ... la plupart d'entre eux pensent n'obtenir d'eux-mêmes rien de bon que par la contrainte; ... chacun se propose un patron, qu'il imite; il ne choisit pas le patron qu'il imite; il accepte un patron tout choisi. Il y a pourtant, ... d'autres choses à lire, dans l'homme. On n'ose pas. On n'ose pas tourner la page. Lois de l'imitation; je les appelle: lois de la peur. On a peur de se trouver seul.[1]

Ménalque seemed to be beginning to apply pressure on Michel. One may be lead to conclude that Ménalque is the stronger force; and consequently, he shall impose his doctrines on Michel. This is not so, Michel must make his own decision. Ménalque's task is to bring out the latent qualities that are already a part of Michel. Michel is so fascinated by the description of such a free and unrestricted life that he is tempted to emulate the example of Ménalque: "Je hais tous les gens à principes."[2]

Ménalque left the party. Michel again has time to reflect. This time, he has had the opportunity to talk twice with Ménalque. The effects of Ménalque's philosophy was beginning to manifest itself within Michel.

Michel's wife, as has been stated was seriously ill. One naturally assumes that her well-being was Michel's primary concern. Perhaps, at any other moment in his life, this would have been true. The words of

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[1]Ibid., p. 115.

[2]Ibid., p. 116.

Ménalque were so imprinted on his mind, that he developed an aversion toward her:

> Je la repoussai, luttai contre elle, m'irritant contre moi de ne pas mieux m'en liberer.[1]

The veil was removed more from the face of the new being that tormented Michel within, when, one night he went to Ménalque's apartment. Michel was hesitant at first. He finally, however, decided to go. That night, Ménalque, who was about to leave Paris, left him with this impression:

> L'important, c'est de savoir ce que l'on vaut. C'est du parfait oubli d'hier que je crée la nouveauté de chaque heure.[2]

Ménalque departed; but, he left the imprint of his philosophy on Michel. This philosophy, if one is to interpret all of the advice thus far given by him, can be called hedonism. For it seems as if he placed this idea of the total enjoyment of pleasure at the center and all the other parts of life are affixed around it.

Marceline was critically ill and Michel was inattentive to her. He was bored having to constantly be near her. He welcomed improvement in her health so that he could leave her without fear of a relapse. One evening at dinner, a relapse occured. Michel then promised Marceline that if they return to Sorrente, he would love her as he had previously while they were there. While they were enroute to Sorrente, Marceline continued to suffer. Michel wished to cure her by loving her. His love was motivated more by sympathy than by desire. Marceline became worse.

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[1] Ibid., p. 119.

[2] Ibid., pp. 120-122.

The severity of her coughing reminded Michel of his. Again he wanted to sympathize with her. But for some reason, he began to fear being compassionate.

The effect of Ménalque's philosophy, even while Marceline was severely ill, was still pushing Michel towards making his decision about life:

> J'en venais à ne goûter plus en autrui que les manifestations les plus sauvages ... je n'eusse pas dans l'honnêteté que restrictions, conventions ou peur ... Nos moeurs en avaient fait la forme mutuelle et banale d'un contrat.[1]

After they arrived in Sorrente, Marceline's condition became even worse. During the day Michel was forever near her; but at night, Michel, filled with a hidden desire to experience the bonheur that he had felt when with Charles, would leave:

> ... quand son souffle plus égal m'avertissait qu'elle dormait, ... je me glissais dehors comme un voleur.[2]

They left Sorrente. Marceline had not improved, instead her condition became worse. Michel was still being plagued with his newly conceived personality. He felt that going further south could aid both of them, Marceline physically and himself mentally.

They arrived in Touggourt, where Michel again met Moktir. One evening Moktir carried Michel to a cafe. There they met Moktir's mistress. She led them to her bedroom. While Moktir played with a pet rabbit, his mistress drew Michel near her. He pushed her away. Why? Perhaps, because his main purpose for having followed Moktir was to be able to be with him alone.

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[1] Ibid., p. 156.

[2] Ibid., p. 163.

Michel returned to the hotel where, as he went up to their room, he thought Marceline asleep. As he entered he found her seated on the bed. She was completely covered with blood. Her condition steadily worsened and she died during the night. He burried her at El Kantara.

At this point in Michel's life it would seem that the inner conflict which has tormented him for so long is over; the goals towards which he has been consciously or unconsciously striving are within his grasp, and the ferveur, the liberté, the disponibilité and the love of life for itself is available to him. With the death of Marceline, the last attachment to traditional or conventional family life is broken. It seems therefore that his metamorphosis is complete. He is no longer the stereotyped, inhibited and conventional bourgeois whom we met in the first pages of L'Immoraliste. He has evolved into a completely liberated human being, one who rejects all social and moral restraints in order to live his own life as he wants to live it. In this evolution or rebirth of the new personality, Michel seems to have accepted and followed (though painfully and reluctantly at times) all of the precepts and advice given by Ménalque, and the narrator of Les Nourritures terrestres. Each of the major themes of this work can be considered as a guidepost along the road of Michel's quest for his new being. Because of this situation Michel should be extremely happy and enthusiastic about his future, but is he? The answer, unfortunately for him, is in the negative.

Michel is now plagued by doubts, fears, and even disappointment. He tells his friends:

> Ce qui m'effraie, c'est, je l'avoue, que je suis encore très jeune. Il me semble parfois que ma vraie vie n'a pas

> encore commencé arracchez-moi d'ici à présent, et donnez-moi de raisons d'être. Moi je ne sais plus en trouver. Je me suis délivré, c'est possible; mais qu'importe? je souffre de cette liberté sans emploi. Ce n'est pas que je sois fatigué de mon crime, s'il vous plaît de l'appeler ainsi; mais je dois me prouver à moi-même que je n'ai pas outre-passé mon droit.
> . . .Ici toute recherche est impossible, tant la volupté suit de près le désir. Entouré de splendeur et de mort, je sens le bonheur trop présent et l'abandon à lui trop uniforme. Je me couche au milieu du jour pour tromper la longueur morne des journées et leur insupportable loisir. ...Quelque chose en ma volonté s'est brisé; je ne sais même où j'ai trouver la force de m'éloigner d'El Kantara. ...[1]

Even his affair with the inn-keeper who provides him with food, and his attraction to her little brother, Ali, brings him no joy or happiness, only boredom. The relationship with Ali is continued through force of habit and the lack of anything better to do.

And thus the <u>récit</u> ends, not in an atmosphere of triumph and exaltation, but rather in a mood of gloom, frustration and doubt. There is an implication that complete freedom, the rejection of conventional norms and morality do not guarantee happiness to an individual. And since Gide, in his preface tells his readers that, "je n'ai cherche de rien prouver, mais de bien peindre ma peinture,"[2] it can easily be assumed that his advice to the reader of <u>L'Immoraliste</u> is the same that the narrator gives to Nathanael at the end of <u>Les Nourritures terrestres</u>:

> ...à présent, jette mon livre. Emancipe-t'en. Quitte-moi. Quitte-moi; maintenant tu m'importunes; tu me retiens; l'amour que je me suis surfait pour toi m'occupe trop. Je suis las de feindre d'éduquer quelqu'un ...
> ...jette mon livre; ne t'y satisfais point. Ne crois que ta vérité puisse être trouvée par quelque autre; ...[3]

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[1] <u>Ibid</u>., pp. 178-179.

[2] <u>Ibid</u>., x.

[3] Gide, <u>Les Nourritures terrestres</u>, p. 169.

It seems logical to conclude, therefore, that Andre Gide wrote both of these works in order to clarify his own thinking, and not to proselytize his readers. The first, Les Nourritures terrestres, is presented in the form of a diadactic and philosophical monologue. After a series of impressionable personal experiences, the author creates in L'Immoraliste a fictional illustration of the themes and ideas which he exposed in the previous work. He carefully terminates his récit so that the advice given in the "Envoi" of Les Nourritures terrestres is applicable to the fictional work. It is hoped that the evidence presented in this study justifies the contention that L'Immoraliste is a novelis- application of Les Nourritures terrestres.

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